

but to the Masai as a watering place. Situated at an altitude of 4,000 feet it is flanked on the east by the Kilweya Escarpment, and on the north-west by Mount Ruwesi. Water is not procurable during the dry season, but the area is used by the Masai during the rains when most of the available water then runs to waste. 133

The country between the Kedong Valley, and the Usao Nyiro at Van de Weyer's Drift, is cut up by deep escarpments and studded with ironstone hills, intersected by jagged ridged ranges, all of a volcanic nature. The soil is, for the most part, a sandy orange dust. The hill sides are covered with rough [134]
[137] these bushes and mimosa amongst which a considerable amount of good grass is apparent. The area is practically waterless at most times of the year, but the appearance of watercourses indicates the presence of large bodies of surface water during the rains.

Near the Usao Nyiro lies the country known as Nduin, level grass country, which affords permanent grazing for large herds of cattle all the year round on account of the proximity of the river and the consequent regular water supply.

To the east lies the country known as L'Okio Kilani, which is the northern extremity of the barren country round Lake Magadi.

The Usao Nyiro, which is taken as the dividing line between the eastern and central portions of the Masai Reserve for the purposes of geographical description, flows into a swamp to the north of Lake Natron, which contains the lowest part of the reserve, being no more than 2,000 feet above sea level. The valley is fairly healthy in dry weather, but in the rainy season the inhabitants move westwards to the summit of the escarpment, which rises in a series of abrupt and rocky ridges on the right bank of the river from the Anglo-German boundary as far north as the Narosura River. The eastern portion

West of this escarpment stand the Lolita Hills, rugged masses extending over a wide area of country, watered by frequent streams, and of an altitude generally greater than 7,000 feet. These hills form the watershed of the tributaries of the Mara River, the chief of which in these parts is the Ollojo (Ongusinet), which follows a course nearly parallel to the boundary and which enters the Mara River as it crosses the border. The Lolita Hills present good grazing grounds, well supplied with water and grass, but they are too mountainous and rocky in places to be utilized to their full capacity.

North of the Narosura, and before reaching the Lolita Plains, the Narosura Plains present grazing areas of the best quality, whose undulating slopes carry heavy crops of grass and are much frequented by Masai cattle. Permanent water is obtainable at regular intervals from the small tributaries of the Narosura.

The Lolita Plains are entered at the Ngure Gate and, though there is a deficiency of permanent water in this part, the grazing is otherwise good. The extensive areas comprised in the north-eastern portion of the Lolita Plains consist of very open and black country, swept by cold winds, which send the temperature at night down to well below 0° F. and carrying a short close grass, which is more suitable for sheep than for cattle. [132] The eastern boundary of the Plains is the Usao Nyiro, which has not at this time entered into its deep ravine. At Van de Weyer's Drift the river is some twenty yards wide, running with a strong current between fairly high banks and of a depth varying at different seasons of the year, but never less than two or three feet deep at the drift. North of Narak Station the heights of the Mara rise through thick bush and forest country, well watered, but practically unsuitable for stock, to the top of the range and it is through this country that the Usao Nyiro, with its tributaries, fall until they unite near the drift.

West of the Narak lies the main portion of the Lolita Plains, a vast area of open grass country, level, or slightly undulating, intersected with small watercourses, which hold water in the deeper ravines and in the neighbourhood of occasional springs at most seasons of the year, and dotted at intervals with copse of bush and scattered clumps of mimosa, a country which possesses magnificent possibilities as a grazing area if a few engineering projects are undertaken to

THE FERTILE AREA OF MASAI LAND. 237

The northerly or higher plateau region of Masai Land may be described as rising from an elevation of nearly 5000 feet on either side, and culminating in the centre at an elevation of little short of 9000 feet—although through this very line of highest elevation runs from the Dogilani plain the remarkable meridional trough which encloses the charming chain of isolated lakes, Naivasha, Elmetoita, Nakuro, and Baringo; and which, at the last-named place, begins to widen out till it assumes the characteristics of the southerly plain of Masai Land. [33]

On the eastern half of this divided plateau rises, as we have seen, the snow-clad peak of Kenia—and the picturesque range of the Aberdare Mountains, which runs almost parallel with the central line of depression. A more charming region is probably not to be found in all Africa, probably not even in Abyssinia. Though lying at a general elevation of 6000 feet, it is not mountainous, but extends out in billowy, swelling reaches and is characterized by everything that makes a pleasing landscape. Here are dense patches of flowering shrubs; there noble forests. Now you traverse a park-like country enlivened by groups of game; anon, great herds of cattle, or flocks of sheep and goats are seen wandering knee-deep in the splendid pasture. There is little in the aspect of the country to suggest the popular idea of the Tropics. The eye rests upon coniferous trees, forming pine-like woods, and you can gather sprigs of heath, sweet-scented clover, anemone, and other familiar forms. In vain you look for the graceful palm—ever present in the mental pictures of the untraveller. The country is a very network of babbling brooks and streams—those of Lykipia forming the mysterious Guaso Nyiro; those of Kikuyu the Tana, which flows to the Indian Ocean through the Galla country; while farther south in Kapte the streams converge to form the Athi River, which flows through U-kambani to the Sabaki River.

Kikuyu occupies the higher areas of the eastern half of the plateau, cutting across it immediately south of the equator. Some of the higher parts are covered with a dense forest of bamboo; notably to the east of Naivasha, and between it and the Aberdare Mountains. Hence the Swahili name of one recruiting-place—Mianzi-ni (Bamboo Country). [37]

The greater part of Lykipia—and that the richer portion—is quite uninhabited, owing, in a great degree, to the

WA-NJEMPS DAMSELS.

265

possession of my premises with the most agreeable abandon, lolled about the floor like young puppies, examining everything with the curiosity of monkeys. They scrupled not to sit down on my knee, and with feminine blandishments which I could not resist, compelled me to go through my fashionable and highly original entertainment of drawing my own teeth. This was a never-failing source of astonishment, and was received each time with flattering remarks of appreciation. Martin, desirous of reaping cheap fame and attracting the

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P. LONIKWA, KANANIA, FROM NEAR NJEMPS.

attention of the damsels, got beautifully caught on one occasion. He had been trying to impress upon them that he could do all that sort of thing as well as I, and to elench his assertion declared that if one of them cut off his finger he could put it on again. He was holding out his finger, and before he knew what was up one girl had made a vicious cut at it, and nearly severed it. Martin did not try that little game again. Next in interest to the tooth-drawing was the examination of themselves in the looking glass. It was some

18: Merker

FL12 Masai FL12

● 137

[For the scientific binomials of plants in common use by the Masai, see category 824.]

18: Merker

FL12 Masai FL12

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[For generic names of plants and for their uses in animal husbandry, medicine, and nontherapeutic drug manufacture, see category 824.]

/56 cont./

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stamping steps, whereby, singing, it is prayed to 'Ng ai that he may let the boy become big and /57/ make a strong warrior out of him, one who will capture much livestock and then in old age may own a kraal as large as this one is here; then the people enter the kraal where the men again apply themselves to finishing the honey beer, while the women amuse themselves with dancing, for which they sing with shrill voices songs of praise and prayer for 'Ng ai. The success of a festival is judged by the degree that the men's intoxication and the women's gaiety reach at the end of it. Soon after the first name-giving, the second follows, at which the boy receives a name from his father, by which only the latter calls him. More rarely



C. G. Schillings photo.

III. 16. Dancing women.

553

a small festival is also celebrated here. The most important name-giving does not take place until the child can walk. On this occasion the boy receives the name that he bears as his principal name for his whole life, and, to be sure, an elder brother of the mother or,

/68 cont./

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The terms of address between male individuals:

ol aijoni to ol mórúot ol bayan,
ol barnoti to ol mórúot ol bayan,
ol moráni to ol mórúot ol bayan,
ol mórúo to ol mórúot ol mórúo.

/69/

ol aijoni to ol moráni lé moráni,
ol barnoti to ol moráni ěř,
ol mórāni to ol morāni ěř,
ol mórúo to ol morāni 'l aijoni.

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Merker photo.

III. 22. Older men.

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Merker photo.

III. 23. Masai girls from the child to the young woman.

/93 cont./

726 Masai know for stimulating the nerves find use. Their effect will be
[263] discussed in a later section (2).
[276]

2. cf. XIX, Nerve Ailments: the em boschona sickness.

If the opponent is particularly strong, a forest meal sometimes lasts a whole month by order of the ol oiboni.

722 /94/ During this the boys pose as lords in the warrior kraal, but the girls bravely defend themselves with sticks. Every day in connection with their dances the girls sing songs of prayer: May 'Ng ai make the warriors strong and strongest of all the os sandja, etc. The mothers, on the other hand, pray silently in their huts for the same purpose.

726 Still in the forest the El móran put their weapons, ornaments, and clothing in order. Upon their return from the meat meal they remain only a few hours in the kraal, in order to fetch something forgotten and to take along livestock as travel provisions. Here a
[782] few fathers and mothers have already appeared in order to call down



Ill. 36. Consultation on the war expedition.

19: Talbot

FL12 Masai FL12

● 137

[For information on flora, passim, see category 116, pp. 16-22, 166, 197, 206, 240-258, 309 and 324-410.]

21: Huxley Q, T-5 (no date) 1960 FL11 Luo
Masai FL12

133
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16 Where tsetse flies keep out Masai cattle, grass, trees, rivers and wild game still survive: and Sally the lioness enjoys a drink

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136



[Facing p. 109]

MASAI HERDS AND MARA LIONS

imbecility—or perhaps not remarkable, since nothing has been 233
more characteristic of the half-century of European inter- 199
vention in Africa than the slap-happy introduction of bright, 185
well-meaning ideas by enthusiasts of all kinds, without any
regard for their long-term consequences.

Anyway, vets controlled diseases, livestock multiplied and 231
their hoofs and mouths destroyed the precarious grass cover 199
of the plains. The result is that, except where the tsetse fly 311
remains in control, the Masai are living in country poised 185
upon the edge of desherdhood. Some of it has gone over the
edge, some hovers on the borderline, some has not reached
it yet. And so pressure mounts upon those regions that are still
protected by the tsetse fly.

Overcrowded people outside want to get in, overstocked
Masai themselves want to take their herds where grazing is
still rich and deep. If either succeed, unless they adopt very
different methods, they will destroy those regions as surely as
they have damaged their present inheritance. Agronomists and
vets do not want to see these last remaining areas opened up
without strict control. But governments are terrified of
controlling anyone by what may be represented as harsh
measures, and administrators have inclined to caution since
the Masai speared to death a D.C. who was persuading them
to sell some steers. So the matter, like many others, rests in a
state of suspended flux, and everyone hopes for good rains.

III

Down on the Kenya-Tanganyika border, not so very long 000
ago, there lived an Englishman who kept in touch with the
world by carrier-pigeon. For three or four months of the year
no vehicle could reach him, and even in the dry weather it
was a long, hard, bumpy seventy-mile journey from Narok,
where the road ends. The aeroplane has changed all that.
An hour's pleasant flight from Nairobi brought us comfortably
to rest beside a tributary of the Mara river.

First we flew over the Mau, that range of mountains form- 133
ing the south-western wall of the Rift Valley. Covered with 137
forests of cedars and olives and, higher up, of bamboos, the

A NEW EARTH

133
[137] Man is the source of all the rivers watering the western half of Masailand, Kipsigis and part of the Rift Valley. The birth-place of innumerable streams, it is, in theory, protected by its status as a forest reserve.

185
311 Looking out from the small yellow aircraft expertly handled by June Wright, one of the best commercial pilots in East Africa, one could quickly see how different theory was from practice, here as elsewhere. In a forest reserve no one is allowed to fell trees, cultivate, start fires or graze livestock. In less than half an hour, I counted seventeen active fires and saw the shambles created by innumerable others. Whole ridgebacks of the mountain, sticking up like black spines, were as bare as slag-heaps and already runnelled and creased by gully erosion. Older fires were still smoking in some of these devastated areas; one could see the forest being eaten into like a great fur pelt attacked by moths.

As sure as fate, one day there will be no more water for cattle in the streams below. 'God is punishing us,' will say the Masai: but it will not be God, it will be themselves. The streams are already shrinking and the Masai are driving their herds farther into the hills to find grazing. They cannot take cattle into forest and so they burn a way in. They are creeping upwards, spreading destruction as they go in order to escape the consequences of destruction they have already caused.

[222] Other fires are started by honey-hunters who burn down trees to smoke out the bees. Often, in the forest, you can see blackened hollow cedars and olives killed by fires tucked into the roots. If the foliage is dry and the wind right, the fire will spread and get out of hand.

563 And then there are 'acceptees': a clumsy term given to men of other tribes who are settling in Masailand, family by family, with the permission of Masai elders. They are tenants: but it is very unlikely that they will ever go.

[167] In South Nyanza and in Kipsigis it is reckoned that upwards of two thousand families a year are crossing the southern border into Masailand and Tanganyika. In recent years a good many Masai have married Kikuyu or Kamba wives because so many of their own women are sterile; at one time there was quite a trade in Kikuyu girl-children, exchanged for cattle.